OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

CITY of TUNIS,

AND THE

ADJACENT COUNTRY:

WITH

A VIEW

OF

CAPE CARTHAGE, TUNIS BAY,

AND THE

GOLETTA,

TAKEN ON THE SPOT. by Edwards Stanley

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MDCCLXXXVI.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

Lord Viſcount DUNCANNON.

MY LORD,

THE following obſervations on ſome parts of Barbary, with the view of Cape Carthage, Tunis Bay, and the Goletta, accurately taken on the ſpot, were the employments of ſome leiſure hours during my reſidence at Tunis: a ſituation far remote from the comforts of ſociety, and viſited by few travellers.

THE want of places of refreſhment on the roads, and the danger of venturing far inland among a ſet of barbarians ever intent

intent on murder and rapine, are great diſcouragements to the inquiſitive; and though attended by a guard, I met with ſeveral diſagreeable circumſtances.

THE many favours which your Lordſhip has conferred upon me, leaves me not without hope, that you will condeſcend to accept this humble offering; and ſhould it meet with the approbation of ſo competent a judge in literature and the polite arts, I ſhall be happy in the occaſion it affords me of teſtifying how much I am, with the profoundeſt reſpect,

MY LORD,

Your Lordſhip's

Moſt obedient, moſt faithful,

And moſt humble Servant,

EDWARD STANLEY.

OBSERVATIONS

ON

TUNIS, &c.

THE kingdom of Tunis above all other parts of Africa, ſeems to be peculiarly intereſting to the inhabitants of Europe: it is claſſical ground, conſecrated to all lovers of polite literature and the hiſtory of ancient Rome.

FOR I preſume it will be wholly unneceſſary to inform my readers that the city of Tunis ſtands but little removed from the original ſite of Carthage, and that the kingdom of Tunis comprehends the

circumjacent country, which was formerly the territory immediately dependent on that celebrated ancient republic.

We might, therefore, reaſonably ſuppoſe, that every circumſtance relative to Tunis would have been long ſince explored by the curioſity, and diffuſed by the narrations of European travellers.—This, however, is by no means the caſe.—The antiquities of this country have been ſo miſerably deſtroyed by the Saracens and Moors, that little of this kind is now remaining to arreſt attention, to reward labour, and gratify expectation. Add to this, the danger in travelling, which, according to the report of their merchants and better ſort of people, is much increaſed within theſe few years, by the large quantities of fire-arms, poured in upon them from every part of Europe, but particularly from Breſcia, in the Venetian ſtate; it being common for the dealers in thoſe articles to receive twenty cheſts at one conſignment. For the pooreſt and meaneſt Bedouin thinks himſelf diſgraced, if he has not a ſabre, and at leaſt one piſtol in his girdle.

girdle. Theſe reaſons have occaſioned Tunis of late years to be but little viſited; yet ſurely it cannot be unamuſing to inquire into the preſent ſtate of a country, which was once the ſeat of commerce and of empire, which bore no inconſiderable ſhare in the declining affairs of Greece, and which contended with Rome, when in the maturity of her vigour, no leſs than for the dominion of the world. What Tunis is may indeed retain but few veſtiges to ſhew what Carthage was, but the ſpeculative mind may ſtill find pleaſure in the reflections that ariſe from the compariſon. Such reflections, however, I ſhall leave wholly to the imagination of my reader.

It is my purpoſe ſimply to furniſh facts; to deſcribe, more fully than has yet been done, the ſeveral places which I viſited; to touch incidentally on what paſſed before my eyes, or within the reach of my inquiries, during a reſidence of two years; and to ſubjoin ſome few general obſervations on the nature of the ſoil and climate, which yet continue what they are repreſented to have been in

the moſt flouriſhing period of Carthaginian opulence.

TUNIS, the capital of the kingdom ſo called, is ſituated on a riſing ground, beſide a lake of the ſame name, and is about four miles in circuit, containing three hundred thouſand inhabitants.

THE ſtreets are narrow, as in moſt hot countries, and, not being paved, dirty in winter, and duſty in ſummer. The houſes in general low. Moſt of the houſes have a porch or gateway with benches on each ſide covered with mats, where the maſter of the houſe tranſacts his buſineſs, and receives his friends, no perſons, except on ſome extraordinary occaſions, having any further admiſſion. In the houſes of the Conſuls, this porch ſerves by way of exchange, for the merchants, captains of veſſels, brokers, &c. to meet, and tranſact their buſineſs. Beyond this is an open court paved with marble, ſtone, or glazed tiles, according to the ability of the owner, covered over and ſheltered from the ſun and weather, by a ſtrong cotton or linen cloth, which is fixed to the wall, and by pullies, may be folded

folded or unfolded at pleaſure: when entertainments are given, the company meet in the court, which is always kept very nice and clean.

When the houſe has two ſtories, there is ſometimes a cloiſter in the court, and a gallery over it; the rooms are the whole length of the court and galleries, but very ſeldom communicate, the ſtairs going up from the porch or court. It is common to ſee a whole family living together in one chamber.

Among people of diſtinction the walls are hung with ſilk hangings half way down, contrived to hook on and change at pleaſure according to the ſeaſons, they are alſo furniſhed with mats for the ſhoulders to lean againſt.

Moſt of the water uſed in this city is rain water, preſerved in tanks or large ciſterns, which hold ſufficient to ſerve the families five or ſix months. The roofs of the houſes being flat and nicely terraced, on the firſt appearance of rain the conduits are ſtopped up to prevent the dirt and filth running into the ciſterns, when they find the roofs clean,

clean, the pipes are opened, and the water runs in. Almoſt every ciſtern has the baſe of a marble column hollowed out to cover the mouth, thouſands of them being put to this uſe all over the country, the remaining parts of the columns have been broke and uſed indiſcriminately with other common ſtones in their buildings. The court of the great Moſque at Tunis, is adorned with many beautiful columns of different orders. I was informed ſeveral very fine are within the Moſque, but as the Moors are more ſuperſtitious than the Turks, no Chriſtian is ſuffered to enter. Tunis is ſurrounded by a wall, but too weak to reſiſt the regular attack of an enemy. The air is wholeſome and much improved by the great quantities of wild roſemary, maſtick, and other aromaticks uſed in heating the ovens, and bagnios.

THE markets are plentifully ſupplied with all the neceſſaries of life: beef and mutton at a penny per pound, poultry in great abundance, more eſpecially pigeons, the largeſt and fineſt I ever ſaw. The people of theſe countries being great bread-

eaters,

eaters, this eſſential article is uncommonly cheap and good; and that made by the French baker for the uſe of their factory, the houſes of Conſuls, and better ſort of Chriſtians, is the beſt and ſweeteſt perhaps in the world.

GREAT quantities of bread are ſold in the market places, the proper officers who go round to inſpect the weights and examine the quality, on finding it ſhort, immediately apply the baſtinado to the ſeller, knowing it muſt be his fault in not ſeeing his bread full weight. The markets for corn, wood, charcoal, &c. have each their reſpective quarters, where buſineſs is conducted with great regularity, and finiſhed by nine in the morning during the Summer heats.

THERE is great plenty and variety of pot-herbs and ſallads, with a continual ſucceſſion throughout the year; melons and water melons, in great abundance, and very cheap. Proviſions of all ſorts not only excellent, but at ſo moderate a price, that a labouring man may live throughout the day with

bread,

bread, meat and herbs comfortably and well for three-pence.

THE Conſul's drogoman aſſured me his family, conſiſting of himſelf, his wife, his wife's mother and a maid, all expences included, amounted to no more than twenty-five pounds ſterling per annum. A book formerly belonging to Mr. Lawrence, Britiſh Conſul in the year 1722, which contains an account of his expences, make the amount ſixty-four pounds ſterling, for the yearly maintenance of ten or twelve perſons in family; proviſions are conſiderably raiſed ſince that time. The expences for the family of the preſent Conſul, then conſiſting of fourteen perſons, amounted to two hundred pounds ſterling per annum.

THE Bazar or receptacle for merchandize where the different crafts carry on their trade, is of great extent, divided into quarters, covered over to ſhelter them from the ſun and rain.

EACH trade in general works by itſelf, as taylors, ſhoemakers, &c. The Jews, who have the

whole

whole of the ſilver buſineſs in their hands, make a large aſſortment of articles for this place, and the inland country, all very coarſely fabricated, theſe have their diſtinct Bazar. I uſed frequently to viſit their quarter, to buy medals; as moſt of the gold and ſilver medals fall into their hands, being brought by the country people, who ſell them for the intrinſic value of the metal.

GREAT numbers of medals are found in this country, particularly after the heavy rains in October, ſome of them worthy the attention of the curious. Mr. Molinari, late Swediſh Conſul, had a fine cabinet of medals and engraved ſtones, many years collecting by the family of his lady. I am informed, ſince his death, they have been purchaſed by the King of Sweden.

THE inhabitants of this country, who are true Iconoclaſtes, mutilate and deſtroy every noble remnant of antiquity. When they find a medal, their method is to ſpit upon, and ſcour it with ſand, and thereby commonly deface both the figure and legend.

THE Jews are very numerous at Tunis, being computed at thirty thouſand; they have their ſynagogues, and are governed by two Alcaids, choſen from among themſelves, and approved by the Bey.

THE ſame cuſtom prevails here as in the Levant, that no buſineſs is tranſacted without their mediation, they being the general brokers. They are, however, for the moſt part poor, and ill treated by the Moors, whom they dare not offend. Such among them as have property, make but little appearance with it.

THE market for black ſlaves is held on Friday in the Bazar, on a place like a ſtage, raiſed about three feet with benches round, and a platform in the middle, to walk them up and down and ſhew their limbs to the purchaſers: no Chriſtian is allowed to buy a black ſlave. I have ſeen many among them, of both ſexes, with fine regular features, very different from the Guinea blacks. Theſe people are brought to Tunis from the interior parts of Africa, by caravans which come regularly once

a year,

a year, but from what part I could never learn. I was informed by a merchant, that they were five months on their journey, bringing oſtrich feathers, gold duſt, ſlaves, gums, and a variety of other articles, which they ſell and exchange for goods proper to carry back.

THE bagnios both for men and women are numerous and much crouded; frequent waſhings being an eſſential article of the Mahometan religion. The expence of the bath each time is at the moderate price of two aſpers.

THE coffee-houſes are chiefly kept by Greeks; the coffee uſed by them is from the French iſlands; and the price, an aſper a diſh.

THE houſes of the European Conſuls, all ſituated near the Eaſt or Sea Gate, are comfortable good dwellings. The Fenduc or Factory of the French nation, conſiſting of ſeveral commercial houſes, is incloſed within their own walls, and governed by a Conſul and Vice Conſul, appointed by the King, under controul of the Chamber of Commerce at Marſeilles.

As I am on this ſubject, I beg leave to make ſome few remarks reſpecting their trade. In almoſt every port of the Mediterranean and Levant to which a veſſel can approach, or where there is any appearance or probability of trade; the French have a Conſul or Vice Conſul. Ships of war are cruizing to protect their veſſels from pirates, which are common in thoſe ſeas. The Conſul has a code of laws for his rule, and merchants and captains of veſſels are under his controul. The port fees are moderate, conſequently not burthenſome to trade. The difference between this method of acting and that of the Britiſh Conſuls, cauſed a very intelligent perſon to remark, that it appeared to him, the French Conſuls were ſent out for the protection of trade, and the Britiſh Conſuls for its oppreſſion. The French Conſul and Vice Conſul are appointed with ſalaries ſufficient to ſupport their rank and dignity, but not permitted to trade on any pretext whatever: conſequently they act with more impartiality between the merchants and natives. The Vice Conſul is a check upon the

the Conſul, and if his behaviour is liable to reproach, it is his indiſpenſible duty to inform the Chamber of Commerce.

THE very reverſe is practiſed by the Engliſh.—Conſuls are ſent out with ſmall ſalaries, and ſome without any. They are permitted to trade; their office gives them credit, and protects their perſons from arreſt; they are liable, by misfortunes in buſineſs, and often, by miſconduct, to become bankrupts. This hurts the dignity of the nation, and makes it a reproach in foreign countries. In the courſe of very few years ſeveral Britiſh Conſuls have become bankrupts, and, making moſt ſhameful dividends to their creditors, have been even pointed at, as they went through the ſtreets, with "there goes the bankrupt Conſul!"

THE Engliſh Conſul appoints his Vice Conſul, who has a very poor pittance ariſing from perquiſites and other ſmall fees of office; and as he is liable to be diſmiſſed by his ſuperior on the moſt trifling occaſion, can be no manner of check on the Conſul.

As

As an Engliſhman jealous of my country's honour, I ſhould be happy to ſee theſe matters under ſome better regulation, being perſuaded if they are not, the little trade remaining to us in the Mediterranean and Levant, will, in a ſhort time, be entirely loſt. The Britiſh nation formerly poſſeſſed a great ſhare of this trade, but it is now dwindled to a ſhadow; and, I may venture to ſay, by bad management alone. On my return to England I was extremely concerned to find the board of trade aboliſhed; an inſtitution, if well directed, eſſentially neceſſary to a country like ours: I am of opinion if it was again eſtabliſhed, and proper perſons, well acquainted with commerce, to preſide, it would be attended with great advantages, particularly at this time, when new ſyſtems of trade are forming, which will in a great meaſure change the face of commercial affairs, not only in the eaſt, but in many other parts of the world.

I BEG leave to add, for the information of ſuch of my readers who have not viſited Marſeilles, that from

from eight hundred to one thouſand veſſels are employed from this port, in the Mediterranean and Levant trade, making ſeveral voyages in the year.

It is imagined that France gains more by this than by any other branch of her commerce; the quantities of woollen cloth ſhipped from Marſeilles are ſcarcely credible, the whole Levant being clothed by the French.

Their local ſituation, it muſt be confeſſed, gives them very great advantages over the Engliſh; but theſe have been ſtrengthened by proper attentions paid to their articles, particularly to the colours of their cloths, which are in great eſteem among the Turks.

They import to Tunis, Spaniſh wool, coffee, ſugar, ſpices, cloths, linens, and a great variety of other goods: Exporting corn, oil, wax, hides, ſilk, and other commodities the produce of the country. I am ſorry to ſay, there is not an Engliſh commercial houſe, of any degree of note, from Algiers to Alexandria in Egypt.

The Spaniſh wool is worked up into Berretti,

or

or ſmall ſcull caps, by the Tunis cap-makers, who ſupply the whole Levant with this article; which indeed makes one of their principal ſtaple manufactures: the blankets, hykes, burnooſes, and other woollens, being chiefly made at Suſa, Sfax, and along the eaſtern coaſt.

THERE are looms for ſilks, velvets, &c. but as theſe articles are not made in ſufficient quantities for their own conſumption, they are chiefly ſupplied from France.

BARDA, the reſidence of the Bey, two miles weſt from Tunis, is a ſpacious and handſome palace; the court large and ſurrounded by a cloiſter, adorned with marble columns carved at Genoa. The apartments are good and elegantly furniſhed: upon the whole, it is by much the beſt reſidence in Barbary.

THE late Bey was a quiet peaceable old man, living in great amity with the European powers; diſcountenancing as much poſſible, the fitting out cruiſers againſt them, as he rather wiſhed to encourage a ſpirit of commerce in his dominions. He ad-

adminiſtered juſtice perſonally to his ſubjects; each party pleaded his own cauſe, and the Bey decided with, "you are right," and "you are wrong;" determining the difference without further trouble or appeal; for, to their praiſe be it ſpoken, they know nothing of the chicanery of the law, which though with us the price of liberty, in a great meaſure, is a heavy tax on individuals under pretence of being for the ſecurity of the whole.

THE dignity of Bey is hereditary, and his power abſolute, though they have a Regency or Dowan, but it is rarely ſummoned. The tribute of the country is collected by two flying camps, which take the winter and ſummer circuits: the tribute being paid in money, grain, cattle or kind, according to the abilities of the people. Muſtapha Coja, the Prime Miniſter, who married the daughter of the late Bey, is a very intelligent man, much beyond the generality of the Moors. The late Bey was quietly ſucceeded by his ſon, a circumſtance which has not happened for many years.

FOUR miles from Barda, and ſix from Tunis, is

Manuba, a country houſe belonging to the Bey, built by Haſſan, a good and generous prince, about ſixty years ſince. Here is a noble range of an aqueduct half a mile in length, ſixty feet high, and entire; the channel in which the water ran is three feet in depth.

HAMMAM LEEF, twelve miles eaſt from Tunis, is noted for its hot baths, which are much reſorted to by the Tuniſeans, and are efficacious in rheumatic and many other complaints. Here the Bey has a very fine bath, which he frequently permits the Conſuls and other perſons of diſtinction to uſe. On entering the water, you at firſt imagine it too hot, but within two minutes perſpiration commonly ſucceeds, and you feel a ſingularly pleaſing ſenſation. Ten minutes are ſufficient to remain in the bath. There are places raiſed round to lay the mattraſſes; a large Mooriſh blanket being ſpread double, the patient enters between the folds, the ſweat pouring out very copiouſly for half an hour. Half a quarter of a mile from this bath is another ſource, which riſes in the open air,

but

but is too hot for bathing. The water has a purgative quality, and the patient generally begins with drinking it two or three days before he uſes the bath. Snakes, frogs, and other reptiles, thrown into this water, die immediately. No accommodations are to be had at this place, ſo that the patient is obliged to carry every neceſſary along with him.

SULIMAN, ſix miles from theſe baths, is ſituated in a beautiful fertile plain, abounding with corn and olive trees. The inhabitants are deſcended from the ancient Andaluſian Moors. They ſtill retain the Spaniſh language, and are very civil to Chriſtians.

ZOWAM is a ſmall town ſouth of Tunis, and diſtant from that city about thirty-ſix miles, with a very high mountain above it. Here is a temple of Diana, erected in the earlieſt times of the Carthaginians, the form of which is ſtill entire. The principal walls are built with very large ſtones of a dark brown colour, diamond cut, to correſpond with the aqueduct. The entrance of the temple

is by two doors of the ſame figure and dimenſions, large and high, with an aſcent of ten ſteps, which takes in the whole length of the edifice. Between the doors are two oval baſons, which communicate, and form a reſervoir; the baſons are of the ſame ſtone as the temple, but begin to decay.

FROM the mountain iſſues the famous ſtream of water that formerly ſupplied the city of Carthage; the aqueduct of which had ſcarcely its equal in length, beauty and ſolidity. It conveyed the water ſixty miles, and may ſtill be traced quite to Carthage. Many of the ſtones are of twenty tons weight. The ſource paſſes under the temple, and falls in a large ſtream into the baſons between the doors. There are ſtill to be ſeen within the temple ſeveral niches, which, probably, were for ſtatues; but the dome is quite ruined. Pieces of columns, of ſeveral beautiful kinds of marble, are ſtill obſervable among the rubbiſh. This temple is delightfully ſituated; from the two doors may be diſcovered, Tunis, the Guletta, Cape Carthage, Cape Bona, with a vaſt extent of country. The

town

town of Zowam at the bottom is ſmall and ill built, as are all the towns in this country; the houſes conſiſting only of a ground floor.

THIS proſpect is wonderfully variegated; adorned with many fine gardens, full of oranges, lemons, piſtachios, and other fruit trees peculiar to this climate, all watered from this ſource, which is conveyed by little channels to the roots of the trees. I may with truth affirm, no part of the globe furniſhes a richer and more beautiful landſcape, or affords a more delicious and ſalubrious air. The inhabitants are chiefly compoſed of the families of Chriſtian renegadoes, deſcended from the ancient Andaluſians, expelled their country in the reign of Ferdinand, called the Catholic, and Iſabella his conſort. They are, in general, more civilized, and, in conſequence of their origin, ſhew leſs averſion to Chriſtians, than the other natives of this country.

THE lake of Tunis is about thirty miles in circuit, and was of ſufficient depth, in the time of Car-

Carthaginian glory to receive large veſſels; but is now almoſt choaked up with filth from the ſewers of Tunis; the ſandalls or paſſage-boats touching the mud almoſt the whole way.

In the lake is a caſtle called Shickely, which might formerly have been of ſome conſequence, but is now fallen to decay. Large flocks of flamingos frequent this lake, and, by the beauty of their plumage, are a great ornament to it.

The Goletta, or inlet from the ſea, which ſupplies the lake, is defended by two ſtrong caſtles, well provided with braſs ordonance, which alſo command that part of the bay, where the trading veſſels in general anchor. Additional batteries have been made during the Spaniſh expeditions to Algiers, and their late diſputes with the Venetians. The old caſtle of the Goletta, built by the Emperor Charles V. in his memorable expedition to Tunis, ſtood a little more inland; by what remains, it appears to have been much larger and ſtronger than the preſent. For a deſcription of the Bay of

Tunis,

Tunis, Cape Carthage and the Goletta, I beg leave to refer to the plate.

In curvo lido poi Tuniſi vede,
C' ha d' ambo i lati del ſuo golfo un monte:
Tuniſi ricca & honorata ſede,
A par di quante n' ha Libia piu conte. *

TASSO Geru. Canto XV.

THE Malteſe, in June 1777, entered the bay of Tunis at midnight, and burnt three large veſſels belonging to the Bey; the crews being on ſhore, they met with no reſiſtance, and rowed out of the bay unmoleſted.

ARIANNA is a ſmall village ſix miles north-eaſt from Tunis. Here is a beautiful range of the aqueduct, ſeventy-four feet high, ſupported by columns ſixteen feet ſquare, and which ſtill increaſed in ſplendor the nearer it approached Carthage: the

* Next Tunis, on the crooked ſhore they ſpy'd,
Whoſe bay a rock on either ſide defends:
Tunis, all towns, in beauty, wealth and pride,
Above, as far as Libia's bound extends.

FAIRFAX.

ſtones

ſtones are all diamond cut in the ſame manner as at the temple of Zowam.

NEAR this ſpot ſeveral ancient mattamones, or ſubterraneous magazines for corn, have been diſcovered, within theſe few years, capable of containing a thouſand buſhels, ſtrongly arched with large ſquare ſtones. The Moors have already begun to demoliſh them, it being their cuſtom to do ſo with every thing beautiful as ſoon as it comes to light.

SEEDY BOOSIDE, ſo called from the ſanctuary of a Mooriſh ſaint buried there, is a town delightfully ſituated at the entrance of the bay, on the ſummit of Cape Carthage, commanding the bay of Tunis, and a very extenſive ſea view. The inhabitants have a great averſion to Chriſtians viſiting the burial place of their ſaint, who is in great eſtimation among them.

THE few remains of Carthage conſiſt only of ſome fragments of walls, and ſeventeen ciſterns for the reception of rain water. Theſe are the ſmaller ciſterns, being ſituated near the Byrſa, in the upper

per part of the city. The large ciſterns, very little of which remain, were nearer the aqueduct.

It may be ſuppoſed every houſe had its ciſtern, (as at preſent) for rain water. In a ſmall village called Melcha, built on the ruins of Carthage, numbers of them are viſible. The country houſe of the Engliſh Conſul being at a little diſtance, I had frequent opportunities of going over the remains of that once famous city, which, as near as I can calculate, was about fifteen miles in circumference.

There are three eminences which are ſo many maſſes of fine marbles pounded together, and were, in all probability, the ſites of temples, and other diſtinguiſhed buildings.

The preſent ruins are by no means the remains of the ancient city deſtroyed by the Romans; who, after taking it, drove out the few wretched inhabitants left alive, entirely eraſed it, and plowed up the very foundations: ſo truly they adhered to the well-known advice, perpetually inculcated by the elder Cato, 'Delenda est Carthago.'

It was again rebuilt by one of the Gracchi family, who conducted a colony to repeople it; and, continually increaſing in ſplendor, it became at length the capital of Africa, under the Roman Emperors; and ſubſiſted near ſeven hundred years after its firſt demolition, until it was entirely deſtroyed by the Saracens, the beginning of the ſeventh century.

Carthage was ſituated in an air ſo pure and ſerene, that it was remarked there was hardly a ſingle day in the year, how bad ſoever ſome part of it might be, but the ſun was occaſionally viſible. This obſervation, made ſo many years ſince, I have recently found to be invariably true, during a reſidence of two years in the vicinity of the ſpot on which that city ſtood; nor can I ſuppoſe any place in the world could boaſt a clearer and more ſalubrious air, it being built on a peninſula, and enjoying a freſh ſea-breeze in the ſummer.

Giace l'alto Cartago: a pena i ſegni
De l' alte ſue ruine il lido ſerba.
Muoino le citta, muoino i regni
Copre i faſti, e le pompe arena, & erba.*

TASSO Geru. Canto 15.

IT is a ſingular incident that the two cities of Carthage and Rome ſhould have been built juſt oppoſite one to the other; the Bay of Tunis and the Mouth of the Tiber being in a direct line:

Littora littoribus contraria, fluctibus undas,
Arma armis.—

VIRG. Æ. l. 4.

MERSA, two ſhort miles from Carthage, and eleven from Tunis, is a very pleaſant ſituation. Here the Bey has two country houſes, one of which has been a coſtly work, built by Haſſan Bey, ſur-

* Great Carthage low in aſhes cold doth lie,
Her ruins poor the herbs in height ſcant paſs;
So cities fall, ſo periſh kingdoms high,
Their pride and pomp lies hid in ſand and graſs.

FAIRFAX GODF. l. 15.

named the Good. From theſe houſes are orange gardens reaching almoſt to the ſea ſhore, on the edge of which is a famous well of ſweet water, eſteemed the beſt and lighteſt in the kingdom; and, cloſe to this, a coffee-houſe. Numbers of people from the neighbouring places, reſort here to drink coffee, and a glaſs of this natural luxury, ſo peculiarly enjoyed in the eaſtern countries; few perſons, except thoſe who have lived in hot climates, knowing the bleſſing of a good ſpring.

In the middle of the court is a large mulberry tree, under the ſhade of which they ſit, and ſmoke, and play at cheſs; inhaling the comfortable ſea-breeze, that refreſhes this charming ſpot. Nothing can be more pictureſque than to ſee the Moors gallantly mounted, with their attendants, complimenting one another.

The water is drawn up by a camel with the Perſian wheel, and diſtributed to the neighbouring gardens.

Here are the remains of an ancient port or cothon (ſuppoſed to be an artificial one) built by the Car-

Carthaginians, after Scipio had blocked up the old port; nothing but the turret or light-houſe being left.

PORTO FARINA, about twelve miles from Cape Carthage, was formerly the port where the large veſſels belonging to the Bey were fitted out, and laid up on their return from a cruiſe. This harbour is ſafe from the weather, and opens into a large lake formed by the river Mejerdah, which runs through it into the ſea. The north-weſt wind, which blows right upon the ſhore, together with the ſoil brought down by the river, which has the ſame quality as the Nile of overflowing its banks, has formed a bar; ſo that only ſmall veſſels can now enter. It is ſtill the arſenal where the naval ſtores are kept.

THE Swediſh nation, though in alliance with the Bey of Tunis, were not ſuffered to hoiſt their colours on the Conſul's houſe, as is the cuſtom, until a preſent of guns and naval ſtores, which had been ſometime promiſed, was delivered. Notice being received of the arrival of the veſſel at Minorca,

and

and that ſhe would ſail for Tunis, the firſt fair wind, preparations were made by the Swediſh Conſul for a dinner, ball and other rejoicings ſuitable to the occaſion; when, very unfortunately, the Captain, by moonlight, miſtaking Cape Zibeeb and the lake for the entrance of the Bay of Tunis, ran aſhore; and, as ſhe was a large ſhip of three hundred and fifty tons, in three or four days ſunk ſo deep in the ſand, that it was impoſſible to ſave either the veſſel or cargo, which conſiſted of twenty iron twenty-four pounders, and twelve twelve-pounders, beſides anchors, cables, &c. The Bey was deaf to all remonſtrance, and ſaid, as it was the fault of the Captain, he muſt have others in their place, or would not ſuffer the Conſul to hoiſt the colours. Navigators unacquainted with this coaſt, may very eaſily in the night, miſtake Cape Zibeeb for Cape Carthage; this is to be avoided by obſerving the iſland of Zembra, which makes a good bearing for the Bay of Tunis.

I HAVE furniſhed Mr. Faden, Geographer to his Majeſty

Majeſty, with a chart and ſoundings of this part of the coaſt and bay of Tunis, which he intends publiſhing for the direction of navigators.

BOOSHATTER, formerly the city of Utica, famous in hiſtory, for the retreat and death of Cato, is about ſeven miles inland from Porto Farina: nothing remains of its ancient grandeur, except part of a large aqueduct, ſome ciſterns, and other magnificent, and diſtinguiſhable ruins, which cover a large extent of ground, and ſhew it to have been a very conſiderable place. The ſea, undoubtedly, came up to this city, though now ſeven miles diſtant.

BISERTA, forty miles north-weſt of Tunis, is beautifully ſituated upon a canal, between a large lake and the ſea, extremely convenient for trade, and ſurrounded by a fine fertile country, abounding with all the comforts of life. Provided the Moors were induſtrious, no place would bid fairer to become a moſt capital mart, and carry on a very extenſive commerce, being in the center of the Mediterranean. This fine port, for want of a

little

little care, will ſhortly be in the ſame ſituation as Porto Farina.

THE mullets of this lake are the largeſt and beſt in Barbary; great quantities of their rows dried and made into Botargo, are ſent from hence into the Levant, where they are accounted a great dainty.

HAVING now deſcribed all the places, which I could poſſibly viſit with any degree of ſafety, I ſhall only make ſome few remarks on the air, ſoil, and produce of the country.

THE kingdom of Tunis is ſuppoſed to be about one hundred and eighty miles in length, and two hundred and fifty in breadth; ſituated in a fine wholeſome air and fertile ſoil, ſaturated with ſaline particles of ſo looſe a contexture, that very little labour is required in the cultivation of it; a yoke of oxen being ſufficient to plough an acre in a day. It produces corn of all kinds, except oats, in the greateſt abundance. After the firſt rains, which generally fall about the tenth of October, and continue, with great violence, for eight or ten days,

they

they begin to ſow wheat, and barley a month later; the harveſt falling the latter end of May, or the beginning of June. If it rains for two or three days in the beginning of April, the crops are generally ſecure, and the harveſts plentiful; but failing of ſuch ſeaſonable ſhowers, which ſometimes happens for two or three years together, great diſtreſs enſues; no magazines of any kind being provided. The entire ſubmiſſion which they pay to the will of God, and their firm reliance on his providence, make them imagine ſuch precautions altogether uſeleſs, and even impious.

About the middle of this century, the harveſts in the neighbouring kingdom of Tripoly having failed, for five or ſix years ſucceſſively, for want of theſe latter rains, the inhabitants were reduced to the greateſt extremity, and obliged to emigrate in ſuch numbers, that the country was almoſt depopulated; upwards of ſixty thouſand having ſettled in the kingdom of Tunis.

The air all along the coaſt is pure and wholeſome. The hot weather generally ſets in the be-

ginning of June, and laſts until the middle of September, being tempered by the conſtant ſea breeze, that blows from nine in the morning to near ſunſet.

WINTER, if it may be ſo called, continues only from the middle of December, to the tenth or twelfth of January; the heavy rains at that ſeaſon rendering the air chilly and raw.

SOMETIMES in the months of July and Auguſt, the wind from the Sahara, or Deſart, begins to blow, bringing with it clouds of fine ſand, which darken the air, and penetrate into the moſt ſecret receſſes. The effects of this burning wind, which may be juſtly compared to the heat iſſuing from the mouth of an oven, are truly diſtreſsful. The uſual remedy is to ſhut the windows and doors, and to ſprinkle the floors with vinegar and water. I had the misfortune to experience it during four days. Was it to laſt much longer, nature muſt ſink under this calamity. I expoſed a roll of hard pomatum to the air, which, in the courſe of two hours, melted down, as if held before a fire.

THIS

THIS is the Sirocco deſcribed by Mr. Brydone in his tour to Sicily and Malta. I have felt it in Palermo and ſeveral parts of Italy; but not to be compared with the ſame fiery wind on the continent, as it loſes conſiderably of its heat and ſuffocating quality in paſſing the ſea. The Arabs are aware of its approach by a ſulphureous ſmell, and by the redneſs of the air in the point it blows from; they uſually throw themſelves on the ground when they perceive it coming, to preſerve them from the firſt blaſt, which they reckon moſt noxious; ſaying, Nature has taught the brutes to keep their heads cloſe to the earth when they feel its approach: it is often mortal when ſuch precaution is not taken; and many inſtances have happened where great numbers in a caravan have periſhed. It is ſaid to have no ill effect, until two feet above the ground.

THE Arabs recount many marvelous ſtories concerning this wind; but as they are remarkable for the wonderful and fabulous, little faith is to be given to their narratives.

An uſeful horſe may be had from three to ſix or ſeven pounds ſterling, but the preference for riding is given to mules, thoſe of this country having fine delicate limbs, and going at a great rate with a motion particularly eaſy, a recommendation of the firſt importance in a warm climate. When you wiſh to travel faſter, the cuſtom is to pull the bridle, and they go off on a pace with amazing ſpeed.

The Tuniſeans have alſo a breed of aſſes, much larger and more ſpirited than moſt in Europe, many of them fourteen hands high. Horſes and mules are dear or cheap in proportion to the barley harveſt, as they are fed only with barley and its ſtraw, no oats growing here.

To conclude, the whole coaſt of Barbary, from the entrance of the ſtraits of Gibraltar to the confines of Tripoly, is one of the fineſt and moſt fertile countries in the world, abounding with every neceſſary of life, and if in the hands of proper cultivators, capable of being made a granary for Europe.

THE reader may rely on this ſhort and ſimple narration; which is not tricked out with ornaments that often diſguiſe, rather than embelliſh the truth; neither has the author affected the parade of diſcuſſion, and, ſtill leſs, the whim of digreſſion; by which means the journey of a day might be ſwelled to a large volume. He hopes, however, that the matter will afford ſome pleaſure as well as information to thoſe who are deſirous of being acquainted with the preſent ſtate of a country once ſo eminent: and ſhould it furniſh any hints for the improvement of our commerce with this important ſtate of Barbary, the author will think himſelf amply gratified.

FINIS.